



BeefTalk: Pounds Weaned Per Cow Exposed Holding at 500 Pounds

All those “naysayers” that claim you cannot wean 500 pounds per cow exposed to the bull should look again.

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The market talk was casual until the producer leaned over and said, “We just marketed a 90.8 percent calf crop with an average weight of 560 pounds at 189 days of age.”

The room grew quiet.

“Are you sure?” a neighbor asked.

“Yep, but I was just average. Maybe someday I can manage my way to the upper third,” the rancher replied.

Culling begins next week. The hope is that enough hay is available to hold over the core of the cow herd.

The first step to culling cows is to know where one is in terms of benchmarks. This knowledge will help steer the process.

On an annual basis, the North Dakota Beef Cattle Improvement Association (NDBCIA) calculates and updates the benchmarks from producers enrolled in the Cow Herd Appraisal of Performance Software (CHAPS). CHAPS is an inventory-based program that does not allow for the omission of cow records.

Both reproductive and performance data is indicative of today's upper Great Plains beef cattle production. The benchmarks are a running five-year average of herds that have been in the CHAPS program a minimum of three years.

For comparing the 2008 herd performance, the new benchmarks will be based on 2003 through 2007 herd performance records for a total of 386 herd years. The actual number of herd years in the system is 551, but not all the herds make the three year cut off or are outside of North Dakota, South Dakota, Montana and Minnesota.

Through CHAPS, the NDBCIA evaluated 107,580 records during this time. A total of 77,975 individual cow/calf records met the criteria.

The number of qualifying cow records (and the actual number of submitted records in parenthesis) for each year is:

2007 - 15,414 cow records (23,051 submitted)

2006 – 19,858 cow records (23,284 submitted)

2005 - 14,677 cow records (19,823 submitted)

2004 – 14,086 cow records (18,429 submitted)

Images

CHAPS 2008 Production Benchmarks	
Number exposed	200 cows
Average cow age	5.7 years
Pregnancy percentage	93.5%
Calving percentage	92.8%
Weaning percentage	90.8%
Calving 1st 21 days	64.2%
Calving 1st 42 days	89.2%
Calving 1st 63 days	95.7%
Average weaning age	189 days
Average weaning weight	560 lbs
Average frame score	5.8
Weight per day of age	3.01 lbs
Pounds weaned per cow exposed	500 lbs
Replacement percentage	15.0%
Culling percentage	14.6%

CHAPS 2008 Production Benchmarks

2003 - 13,940 cow records (22,993 submitted)

Although annual trends are very evident in the database, the bottom line number of pounds of calf weaned per cow exposed is still holding at 500 pounds. The individual year estimates are 477 pounds for 2003, 516 pounds for 2004, 512 pounds for 2005, 502 pounds for 2006 and 494 pounds for 2007.

This is just one trait NDBCIA monitors through CHAPS. Additional traits can be used to benchmark herd production in a producer's herd.

The average CHAPS producer exposed 206 cows to bulls. The cows had an average age of 5.7 years. Of the 206 cows exposed to the bull, 93.5 percent were pregnant in the fall, 92.8 percent calved in the spring and 90.8 percent weaned a calf in the fall.

During the calving season, 64.2 percent calved during the first 21 days, 89.2 percent during the first 42 days and 95.7 percent in the first 63 days of the calving season. The actual weaning age was 189 days, weaning weight was 560 pounds and the frame score was 5.8.

These growth numbers translated into 3.01 pounds of weight per day of age and a 637 pound adjusted 205-day weight. For every cow exposed, CHAPS producers weaned 500 pounds of calf.

These numbers assist with managerial and genetic selection. There are no absolute answers to what a particular ranch should produce.

The academic answer is optimization. In reality, the need is to grow profitable cattle that a producer can appreciate and still meet industry needs. Producers also need cattle that convert resources into cash without breaking the bank.

Each producer must answer the question, but the answer must be based on data that ultimately tells you if you are in the game. However, one thing is for sure, all those "naysayers" that claim you cannot wean 500 pounds per cow exposed to the bull should look again because your neighbor may well be filling more trucks and trailers.

May you find all your ear tags.

Your comments are always welcome at <http://www.BeefTalk.com>.

For more information, contact the NDBCIA Office, 1041 State Ave., Dickinson, ND 58601, or go to <http://www.CHAPS2000.com> on the Internet.

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Attachments



PDF - CHAPS 2008 Production Benchmarks
(bt091108.pdf - 15.96 Kb)



EPS - CHAPS 2008 Production Benchmarks
(bt091108.eps - 217.82 Kb)